

Homeshare Service – Frequently Asked Questions

These questions were raised at an open session in mid-October 2021 to discuss how Homeshare can provide benefit to NHS staff and support to people in our communities. Homeshare is a growing option providing accommodation in a spare room in a house in exchange for a few hours support to the householder each week. In the South West, the provider of services is Supportmatch.

1. Q: Which organisation should I contact as several are mentioned?

A: NHS England is acting as a facilitator for the wider health system in the South West. Homeshare International is a charitable organisation which has a number of UK members who provide homesharing services. Supportmatch Homeshare is a member of the Homeshare International network but primarily provides support in the South of England. To remain compliant with various regulations, Supportmatch provides the connection to the 'LICENCE' arrangement with homeowners, but to undertake the matching and to manage the wider process, Supportmatch created the Support & Match Community Interest Company which works on a 'not for profit' basis. Organisations in the South West will be working with Support & Match CiC. With regards to this Pilot project, you need to contact Support&Match CIC.

2. Q: You mention homesharers need to agree to provide companionship for 3 hours - is that per day or week?

A: It is 3 hours per week, but this is the 'standard' approach - variations can be agreed so long as they are mutually acceptable to the householder or homesharer.

3. Q: In terms of checking the support is being offered each week - who reviews this regularly?

A: Support & Match CIC is the lead co-ordinator. The match has a regular base of review. Both householder and homesharer are contacted (frequently during the matching process and during the first month, then monthly or as needed). The householder/homesharer can contact us separately with any issues, 7 days a week. Support & Match work to resolve issues and support the arrangement.

4. Q: How is the money managed if not between the householder and homesharer?

A: There is no direct financial exchange between householder and homesharer. Support&Match CIC brokers and manages the arrangement.

5. Q: I'm interested in how the homeowners are identified?

A: There is an opportunity for the NHS and local authorities to actively identify homeowners who may benefit from having a healthcare professional/healthcare student living with them. In addition, Support & Match CIC can identify owners through a local campaign. Local media and social platforms are normally used.

6. Q: I am keen to understand the process - how do people find out about the properties and what 'care' is likely for homeowners?

*A: The standard model which we are suggesting **does not** include provision of care. Care and treatment is regulated by CQC, we provide a mutual agreement of support. Defined healthcare/personal care need is met by another agency (a visiting healthcare professional or domiciliary service). Support & Match takes great care not to place homesharers in a position where they might be likely to be called upon to provide regulated personal care. Where a homeowner develops personal care needs, even where those needs are being met by another agency, the sustainability of the homeshare arrangement will need to be constantly under review.*

7. Q: Is the project just focussing on health or can it include social care?

A: It can cover both health and social care staff.

8. Q: What are your eligibility checks? Do these include DBS for both parties?

A: Both parties can be reference and DBS checked, both are interviewed in-depth, and Support & Match oversees a direct meeting (usually two or three meetings) of both parties. These meetings ensure everyone is on the same page. Often family members are also involved if both parties agree. DBS checks are basic/standard, rather than enhanced.

9. Q: I would be interested in what safeguards (beyond DBS) are in place for internationally recruited colleagues to protect them and also what happens if the householder wants/needs to terminate the agreement mid-way through.

A: The checks and interview process apply to all homeowners and homesharers. Our matching agreement describes a one-month termination clause, this allows for alternate arrangements to be made. International students and staff often benefit from Homeshare as it gives them support to adapt in a new country. Through the matching process international recruits will be introduced to homeowners prior to moving in, as is standard with all homeshare matches.

10. Q: Are any references sought?

A: Two references are gained for homesharer and homeowner, no match goes ahead without them.

11. Q: Could you tell us more about the eligibility checks that have been mentioned a few times sounds different to DBS and references, for instance is there a maximum salary ceiling?

A: There is no maximum salary ceiling, but mostly the service is there for trainees, newly qualified or staff new to the UK. The most important check is that the future homesharer knows what they are getting into, and it is what they want to do.

12. Q: Under what circumstances would a contract be terminated by the householder?

A: A range of reasons – the arrangement has to work for both parties and might reflect changes that happen in people’s lives. The matching is carefully planned, most issues are resolvable - less than 10% need to be re-planned and an alternative set up during the first month of the arrangement. In the unfortunate case of a homeowner passing away, there have been instances where homesharers have been asked to remain whilst the homeowner’s estate is dealt with, but the notice period to terminate occupation remains in place as standard.

13. Q: Where is this scheme working well?

A: The model of intergenerational home sharing has also resonated in other European countries, including France, Spain and Austria, and also across Australia and the US - according to Homeshare International, there is a network of professionals worldwide who run home-sharing programs, with over 50,000 matches to date. See [HomeShare International | Promoting housing for help worldwide](#)

14. Q: Will you actively market this scheme to the local population?

A: Support & Match already advertises placements to local populations. However, there is the opportunity for the NHS and partners to actively identify both homeowners and homesharers.

15. Q: For university students (eg: nursing or midwifery), are there any special measures in place or agreements with the university or is it just directly between the student/homeowner/Supportmatch?

A: No special arrangements are in place at the moment, but this is something to look into with the University accommodation services.

16. Q: Is there an option for Homeshare WITHOUT the 3 hrs? Some willing homeowners may not need the support.

A: The focus of the Guardianship is the community. The homesharer does not need to offer the hours to the householder if the householder feels they don’t need the help. We would encourage the homesharer to do small acts of kindness among the community beyond their normal healthcare role. This does not have to be established in hours. For the householder the concept will not change as they will still make a small income from the arrangement, but we need to make sure that what is paid is below the market value as the Guardianship focuses on both parties to make a small contribution to the community.

17. Q: There is an option includes 10 hours per week: is this the 'Householder with needs' option, or another Homeshare system entirely?

A: In this case the homesharer simply provides 10 hrs a week practical help around the house, companionship and overnight security. This has a lower cost to the homesharer because more support is given. We are offering the Guardianship arrangement (3 hours a week) because we assume healthcare staff will be busy at work. Subject to the homeowner and homesharer agreeing, the number of hours can be altered at a later date.

18. Q: How long are the rental (Licence Agreement) Agreements? Are we thinking long term or can they be shorter ie a month to 6 weeks?

A: Homeshare Guardianship is being offered for this arrangement – it has a minimum 6-month contract, most arrangements go on for 1-2 years.

The Homeshare Service - is 10 hrs a week support and companionship: has a minimum 6-month commitment. This can be used, but Guardianship terms are better with lower hours per week.

The Homeshare Plus Service: 15-20 hrs support and companionship: Minimum 6-month commitment. This is not likely to suit busy healthcare staff and students but might be more applicable with social care options.

19. Q: Is the cost always £400 per month regardless of the type/location of accommodation?

A: It may vary if the accommodation is substantial or if there is more than one homesharer, for example a parent with a child requiring two bedrooms. This is made clear at the start. It therefore depends on location, facilities, amount of agreed time providing companionship and size of the accommodation.

20. Q: Is this just for a single person?

A: Not necessarily, but it will depend on the homeowner's agreement to provide accommodation to more than a single person. If the homesharers are adults/young adults, they will need to go through relevant DBS checks and suitable matching processes, and of course the homeowner will need to agree.

21. Q: What if the homesharer works mostly nightshifts, varied hours or weekends?

A: This will totally depend on the homeowners agreement and home arrangements, especially if the homesharer specifies they need a peaceful daytime environment. However, there have been very successful homeshares, including one where a junior doctor was given a cooked breakfast every morning after a busy nightshift!

22. Q: Can we open this scheme wider than just health recruits? Thinking social care etc across a local authority.

A: Yes, the specific trial is for health and social care, although NHS England have not established this for wider keyworker use, for example fire and police, charity workers,

teachers. Support & Match provides the service more generally, but this specific trial is more targeted to assist health and social care.

23. Q: Can you also share any insight about what 'makes' or 'breaks' the scheme and lessons learnt from other employers / network of employers?

A: The match has to be consensual and both happy with the arrangement. A lot of time is put into getting this right. Supportmatch/Support & Match have completed over 400 matches and learns from all its activity. Research in this field underlines the importance of the homeowner/homesharer relationship. Homeshare has not previously been offered to a specific employer (like the NHS) in the UK, although this has been done in France and Australia where outcomes show high mutual benefits to both homeowner and homesharer.

24. Q: If this is a pilot, when do you expect householders to be available? We have students going into placement very soon (8th November). How and when will this be advertised?

A: It takes 2 – 4 weeks to get going. It is important that we move forward as soon as possible with everybody on board. Standard marketing routes might take longer, and this is where the identification of homeowners as soon as possible would be beneficial to speed the process up.

25. Q: If this is a pilot, what does that mean? What is the aim or benefit of the pilot?

A: The initiative commenced as an opportunity to provide staff/students with an alternative form of living arrangements due to the shortage of housing/the high cost of housing in some areas. The health benefits were also quickly realised. It has been recognised that not only could there be a large demand for this model in the region, but also nationally. Whilst individual organisations need to be satisfied with using the service and recommending it to staff/homeowners, NHS England would like to ensure that before any wider use of the initiative there is sufficient learning/resources in place to assist across other systems who may want to use the service at a date. The 4–6-month trial period will allow for some initial outcomes and learning, but will then support a more managed and resourced tailored roll out.

26. Q: How many people are using this service around the UK at the moment - just trying to get a feel for the scale of the current work?

A: Support & Match matches between 50-100 people annually – demand is growing, and additional staff will come in. In total across the UK 750-1,000 matches are in place currently through the wider Homeshare organisations. This is based on our traditional referral and advertising model.

27. Q: It is good to hear that the scheme is well embedded in other areas - can you give us an idea of the scale? As an example, in London, how many successful homeshare matches have been achieved?

A: Support & Match is the leading homeshare programme in the UK as part of the Homeshare International network. We have had years of experience matching and supporting people and more than 500 matches over the last 10 years in London and the south of England.

28. Q: Presumably we are starting in the South West from a zero base in terms of interested house owners so the key is how we create interest. Is that a joint marketing role or will Support & Match do this?

A: Support & Match will do this – but it would be good if it was a joint marketing exercise to optimise the opportunity. Support & Match will proceed through its normal routes, but the advantage of NHS organisations being involved is that both homeowners and homesharers can be identified at greater speed, which then provides greater opportunity for staff/students to be matched in to housing.

29. Q: For the purposes of the pilot, do you want organisations (university/ trust etc) to agree to participate or is this agreement between Support & Match and the individual householders/homeowners?

A: Their support would be appreciated and will be asked to assist as part of the identification process for homeowners/homesharers, but they will not need to actively be involved in the ongoing relationship.

30. Q: How might Council Tax be affected by having Homesharer?

A: If the homesharer is a full-time student then they are exempt from Council Tax and no additional Council Tax is payable as a result of them moving in. If you are claiming a single person discount, that would not be affected. If the homesharer is working full-time then there is a possibility, if you are claiming a single person 25% discount, this may be withdrawn. Homesharers can be asked to pay an agreed, capped, contribution to any increase in Council Tax as a result of them moving in (c. £25 pcm). There is further advice available for homeowners through the [rent a room scheme](#) and Support & Match will assist homeowners. Homeowners can earn up to £7,500 per annum before being taxed.

31. Q: Does the homeowner have to provide relevant gas certificates, other safety checks or provide insurance?

A: Under Health & Safety Executive guidance, there is the need for the homeowner to be able to undertake an annual gas safety check. Support & Match will request certain details from homeowners as part of the process and this will be one, although Support & Match does CIC not act on a residential agency basis. Homesharers should also be satisfied through the matching process that they are happy to stay in the property. For contents/buildings insurance, this will depend on individual situations but can be particularly helpful in instances where homeowners are not present for long periods of time, for example through extended hospital stays and where having a vacant property could invalidate their insurance. Homesharers are solely responsible for their own contents insurance.

32. Q: Do you accept children or pets:

A: Unfortunately we do not accept any children or pets. As the majority of our rooms are within a Houseshare, not allowing pets or children removes the possibility of allergy sufferers and more.

33. Q: How Support&Match CIC identify the householders:

A: We will need full support from the local NHS, social services, housing services and GP/Primary Care Centres with referring potential householders to S&M CIC.

34. Q: What does the householder need to provide?

A: The householder needs to provide a spare room for the homesharer. The bedroom will need to be furnished with a bed, storage for their clothes and a desk. The householder will also allow the homesharer the use of common areas such as kitchen, living area and bathroom (where a private bathroom is not available). The householder will provide the homesharer with some space (fridge and cupboard) for their food and kitchen utensils.

35. Q: Cost of the service to the Householder

A: Support&Match CIC will charge the householder registration fee of £50 plus the cost of the DBS check, thereafter Support&Match CIC will collect the licence fee on behalf of the householder while retaining a percentage of 18% on the monthly licence fee which will then be transferred to a designated householder's account.

36. Q: Cost of the service to the Guardian

A: The guardians are only liable for the licence fee to the householder payable in advance and 1 month deposit payable prior to the move-in date. Utility bills are including in licence fee.

Further questions to info@supportmatch.co.uk

Or via website www.supportmatch.co.uk